

BETTY T. YEE, BOARD MEMBER STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

Serving the 8.5 million Californians of the First Equalization District, comprised of 21 counties along the northern and central California coast, including the entire San Francisco Bay Area.



Labor Day was created by the American labor movement to pay tribute to the social and economic achievements of American workers. On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers marched in the first Labor Day celebration held in New York City. The parade was organized to exhibit the spirit and strength of trade and labor organizations, and followed a tradition of holding parades, picnics and other festivities to support labor issues.

During the 19th century, organizing and strike efforts were taken by craftsmen and other workers to preserve and increase wage rates, and to improve the often horrendous working conditions of mines, factories, and mills. These efforts were often met with resistance, legal action and violence.

In 1894, workers of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives. A boycott of all Pullman railway cars was also initiated, and railroad traffic throughout the nation was severely bottled. To break the strike, the federal government sent troops to Chicago. A series of riots ensued leaving over a dozen workers dead, and within days, Congress passed a law making Labor Day a legal holiday.



When I think about struggles, I think about how the gains so hard-fought and won were meant to improve the condition of society broadly. Yet this Labor Day, we see many of the past struggles being re-experienced as workers lose ground with regard to their wages, access to health care, retirement security, and full-time employment. The economic recovery is one in which not all are sharing in its prosperity.

On this Labor Day 2014, I embrace and celebrate the courage of workers, many more of whom are joining the ranks of those living from paycheck to paycheck and the thousands who are unemployed or under-employed. Let their stories elevate the debate for policy changes that may increase their standard of living. Let the debate be won on the values of dignity, respect, and honor for all workers.

"Without a struggle, there is no progress." **Frederick Douglass**

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